

Remarks

1. Introduction

Claims 3 – 11 are pending.

2, Information Disclosure Statement

Applicant is enclosing copies of the prior arts mentioned in paragraph 0005 on page 3 together with applicants' brief explanations thereof.

Further, applicant is enclosing a copy of Japanese Patent Application Publication 2000-266264 cited in an office action against the Japanese counterpart together with applicants' English translation of the office action.

3. Objection to Drawings

The drawings were objected to under 37 C.F.R. §1.83(a) as failing to show the every feature of the invention specified in the claims. The Office action questioned whether the second spring as recited in claim 4 was shown. Applicants note that one example of the second spring is depicted as coil spring 134, which is shown in Figs. 8-11. Therefore, Applicants believe that the objection is overcome.

4. Objection to the Specification

The abstract of the specification was objected to because it contained 217 words in 16 lines. Applicants amend the abstract where it is believed appropriate.

5. Rejections based on 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Specifically, the following term in claim 1 was objected to as unclear: "wherein when said coupling end of said plug is brought into engagement with said locking element during advancement of said plug, said inclined surface is moved to a radially outward position relative to said locking element." Further, the Office Action stated that following term in claims 3, 7 and 9 was objected to as unclear: "wherein when said coupling end of said plug is brought

into engagement with said locking element during advancement of said plug, said inclined surface is moved radially outward relative to said locking element." Applicants believe that the Office Action meant to object to claim 8 for the above term, since claim 8 includes the term whereas claim 9 does not. Applicants cancel claims 1 and 7, rendering the rejection moot. Further, Applicants amend claims 3 and 8 where it is believed appropriate.

4. Rejections based on 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103

Claims 1 and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by EP 0 351 438 A1 (Meeske). Claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Meeske, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,708,589 (Masek). Claims 3-5 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Meeske, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,323,812 (Wayne) and U.S. Patent No. 5,255,714 (Mullins). Claims 4, 6 and 9-11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Meeske, in view of Wayne and Mullins.

In rejecting claims 3 and 8, the Office Action acknowledges that the Meeske reference fails to teach a first sleeve and a second sleeve. The Office Action further states that the Wayne reference teaches a pipe coupling with a first sleeve and a second sleeve, citing elements 5 and 8 of the Wayne reference. Applicants respectfully disagree. For convenience, an excerpt from the Wayne reference is reproduced below:

Locking sleeve 5 is generally cylindrically shaped. Locking sleeve 5 has an exterior 90 and an interior 91. **The locking sleeve 5 is affixed to bumper 8 by means of a press fit 51 residing on the exterior 90 of said locking sleeve 5.** Bumper 8 facilitates easy uncoupling of the coupler and the nipple as will be discussed below.

Col. 3, lines 18-23 (emphasis added). As clearly evident from the Wayne reference, locking sleeve 5 and bumper 8 are fixedly connected together, thereby constituting a single sleeve. Therefore, the Wayne reference, as a general matter, fails to teach the first sleeve and second sleeve as recited in claims 3 and 8.

Further, in rejecting claim 4, the Office Action states that the Wayne reference teaches the second spring, citing sliding sleeve spring 18 of the Wayne reference. Specifically, the Office Action states that the sliding sleeve spring 18 in the Wayne reference teaches urges the

second sleeve toward said first angular position. Applicants respectfully disagree. The Wayne reference clearly teaches that the sliding sleeve spring 18 acts to apply a rotational force to sliding sleeve 4. See col. 4, lines 18-20 (“sliding sleeve spring 18 urges sliding sleeve toward the second end portion of the coupler.”) This is evident from the clear teaching of the Wayne reference, in that the spring is to apply a force to “sliding” sleeve 4. This is completely different from the recited limitation in claim 4 that the second spring is for urging the second sleeve, which is as defined in Claim 3 rotatably moved on the socket between a first angular position and a second angular position, toward the first angular position, one example of which is coil spring 134. In particular, the specification teaches the following: “The other end of the coil spring 134 is engaged with the second sleeve 130 to urge the second sleeve 130 toward its first angular position.” Paragraph [0064]. Therefore, claim 4 is patentably distinct over the references of record.

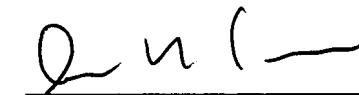
5. Double Patenting

The Office Action stated that should claim 3 be found allowable, claim 8 would be objected to under 37 C.F.R. §1.75 as being a substantial duplicate thereof. Applicants respectfully disagree. Claim 3 recites limitations directed to a socket, whereas claim 8 recites a pipe coupling comprising a socket and a plug. For example, the preamble of claim 3 recites “In a pipe coupling comprising a socket and a mating plug insertable into said socket for coupling engagement”. In contrast, the preamble of claim 8 recites “A pipe coupling comprising a socket and a mating plug insertable into said socket for coupling engagement”. Therefore, Applicants respectfully disagree with the objection to claims 3 and 8.

6. Conclusion

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorneys for the Applicant via telephone if such communication would expedite this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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